MARJORIE LIU
SANA TAKEDA
MONSTRESS
ISSUE 10
THE FUTURE OF COMICS
25
image
EST. 1992

THE MONSTRESS STORY SO FAR...

With the help of a crew of hardened Arcanic sailors from the maritime city of Thyria, Maika embarked on a fact-finding journey to the Isle of Bones, a mysterious place that may only be accessed safely with the help of a bone key that Maika's late mother, Moriko, left behind. Despite the terrible hunger of the Monstrum that lives inside of her, and the best attempts of infernal saboteurs, Maika persevered in her quest – until news of her imminent capture by the Queens of Thyria forced her hand.

Bone key in tow, she and her companions Kippa and Master Ren hurriedly boarded a small skiff to travel the final distance to the island, where the so-called Lord of Carrion awaits.

THE PLAYERS...

MAIKA An Arcanic teen who survived the Great War, and slavery at the hands of the Cumaean witch nuns. Ruthless and haunted, she is determined to uncover the truth behind her mother's murder — and her mother's secrets — in the hope that she can free herself from an ancient and dangerous god called a Monstrum that is imprisoned inside her body and fills her with an otherworldly hunger for human flesh. In her current possession are two clues to her past: a photograph, and a fragment of a mask that many would kill to possess.

MONSTRUM A mysterious, primordial being of tremendous power that shares Maika's body and mind, and fights her for control. Once considered a god, and drawn into this world by the Shaman-Empress, this Monstrum is driven by a deadly hunger, consuming the lives of humans and Arcanics alike, leaving only their desiccated corpses behind. Though it may give the impression that its only wish is to survive, there's far more to this creature, and its desires, than meets the eye…

REN An enigmatic nekomancer cat with mysterious motives, he is one of Maika's companions on her journey, and perhaps an agent of the Dusk Court — or some greater power.

KIPPA An Arcanic fox girl saved from slavery by Maika. Innocent and optimistic, she is frightened by the Monstrum — but trusts Maika and will bravely defend her and others by rushing into battles too dangerous for a child.

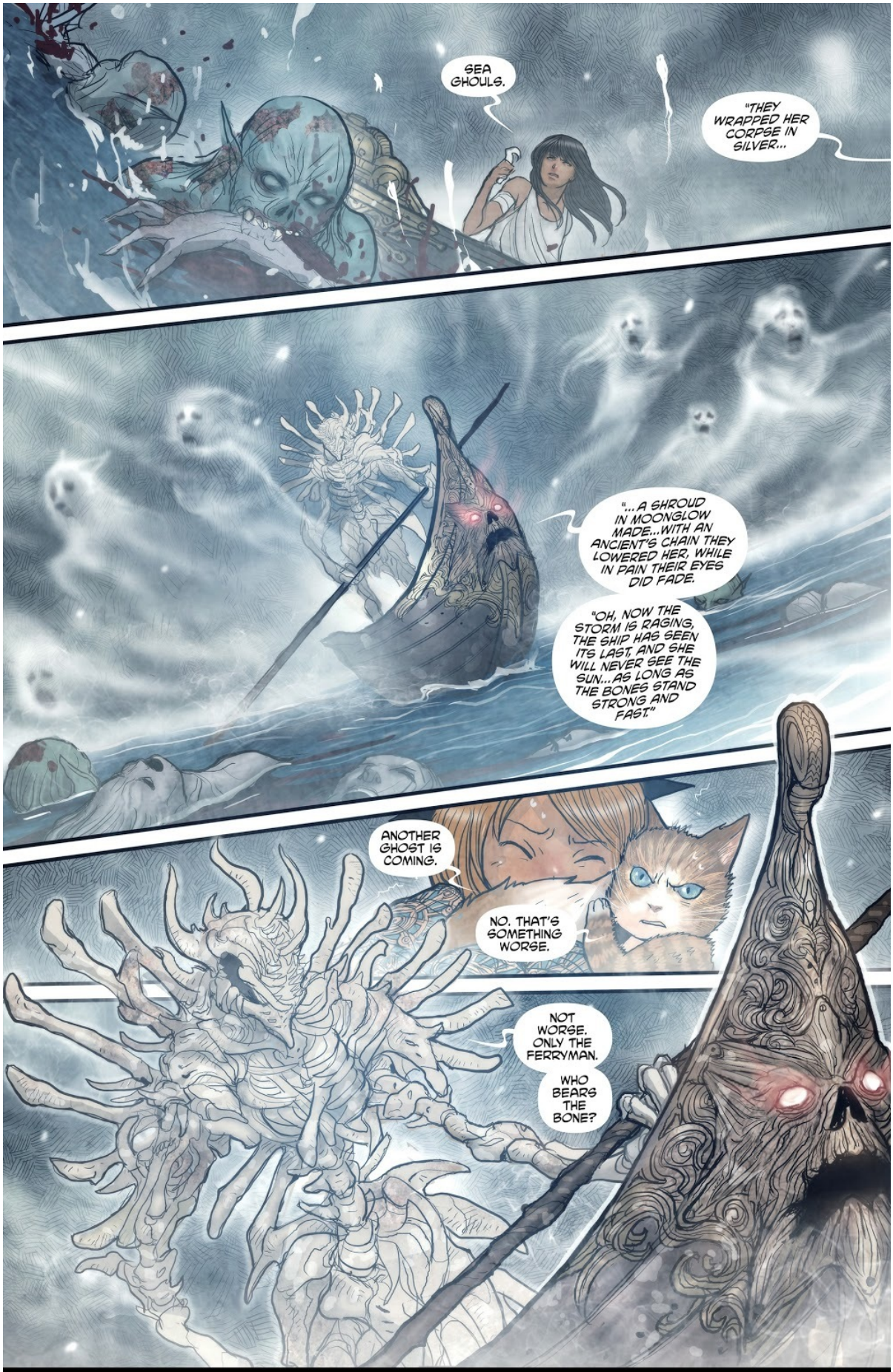
MORIKO Maika's mother, an Arcanic, whose obsession with uncovering the secrets of the greatest Arcanic ancestor, the Shaman-Empress, led to her betrayal and murder. Her reputation as a woman of single-minded drive and intellectual brilliance has only grown since her death.

GODDESS, SAVE ME.
HELP ME... PLEASE HELP...
AVENGE US.
MY LOVE... MY LOVE...
WHERE IS MY CHILD?
LOOK AT THEM. THERE MUST BE HUNDREDS... THOUSANDS.

FIND A WAY
I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY GHOSTS IN ONE PLACE, NOT EVEN DURING MY MISSION TO THE SITE OF THE KETTARA MASSACRE.
HELP... HELP...
RELEASE ME
SAVE ME
THE STRONGEST NEKOMANCER CAN ONLY HOLD THE DEAD FOR A BRIEF TIME. BUT THESE GHOSTS... ARE OLD. THERE IS POWER HERE.
RUN... FROM... HERE
THE TORMENT...
THEY'RE IN PAIN.
I IMAGINE THEY ARE. IT'S UNNATURAL FOR A SOUL TO BE TRAPPED LIKE THIS.
LEAVE...
SAVE YOURSELVES
ISN'T THIS UNNATURAL, TOO?
SO ALIVE... SO ALIVE...
FEED ME LIFE
DAMN IT!
I'VE NEVER FELT ANYTHING LIKE THIS. WHATEVER HOLDS THEM HERE THRESHES THROUGH THEIR SOULS LIKE A GUTWORM.
MISS?!
STAY AWAY FROM US!

MAIKA HALFWOLF!
WHO ARE YOU?
CAPTAIN OF THE BLOOD QUEENS' PERSONAL GUARD.
YOU ARE TO CEASE YOUR JOURNEY TO THE ISLE OF BONES -- IMMEDIATELY.
ARE YOU FUCKING INSANE? YOU NEED TO SWIM OUT OF HERE NOW. THESE WATERS --
WE HAVE ORDERS TO DELIVER YOU TO OUR QUEENS. DO NOT RESIST OR WE WILL HAPPILY KILL YOUR FRIENDS.
JUST AS YOU KILLED OUR SISTER.
LISTEN TO HER! DON'T YOU SEE THE GHOSTS?
WHAT GHOSTS?
I THINK IT'S TOO LATE.

AIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII!!!!!
I TOLD THEM TO LEAVE.
KIPPA, COME TOWARDS US. SLOWLY.
I'M SCARED.
HHHIIIIISSSSS...


SEA GHOULS.
"THEY WRAPPED HER CORPSE IN SILVER...
"...A SHROUD IN MOONGLOW MADE...WITH AN ANCIENT'S CHAIN THEY LOWERED HER, WHILE IN PAIN THEIR EYES DID FADE.
"OH, NOW THE STORM IS RAGING, THE SHIP HAS SEEN ITS LAST, AND SHE WILL NEVER SEE THE SUN...AS LONG AS THE BONES STAND STRONG AND FAST."
ANOTHER GHOST IS COMING.
NO. THAT'S SOMETHING WORSE.
NOT WORSE. ONLY THE FERRYMAN.
WHO BEARS THE BONE?

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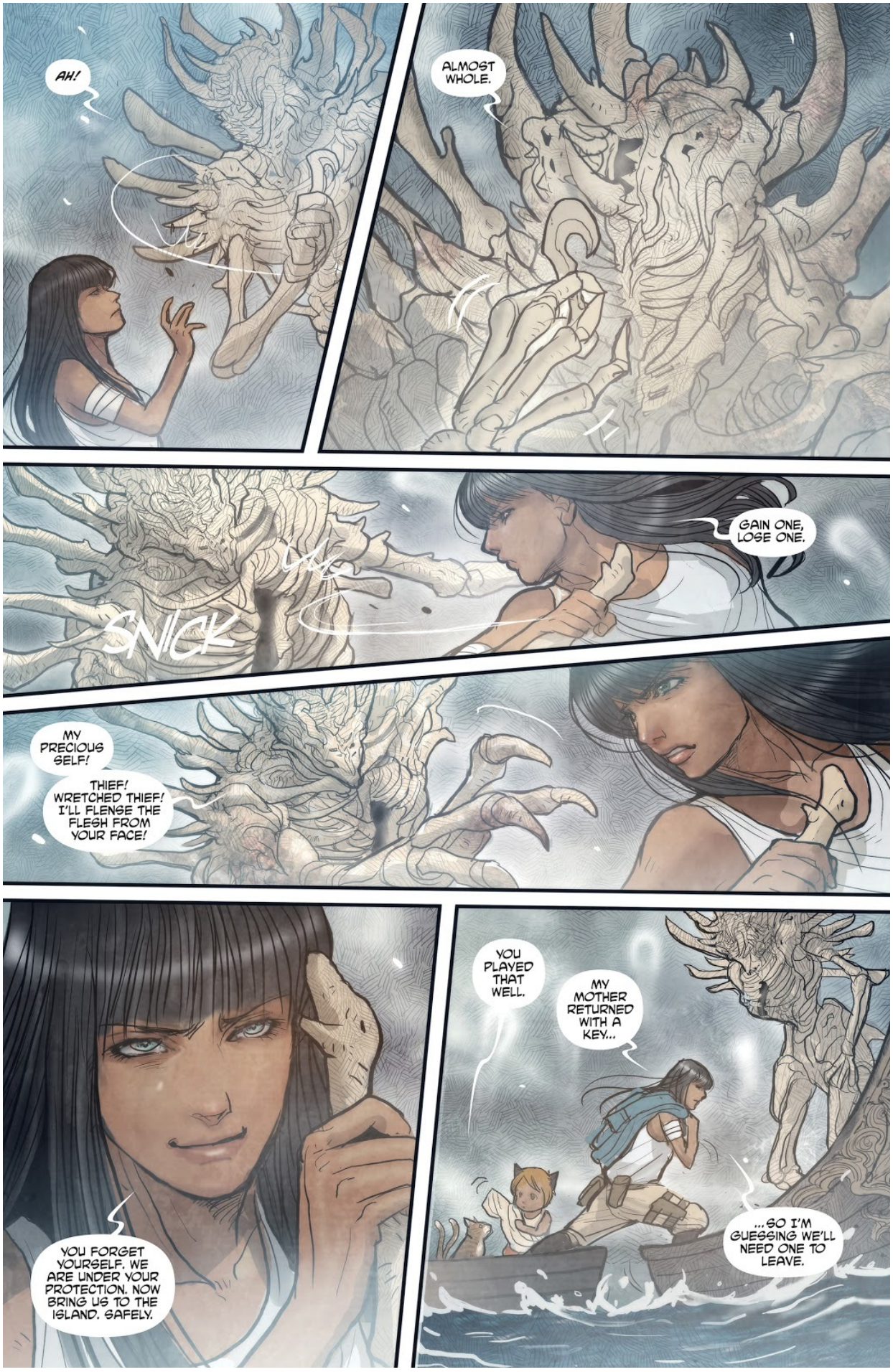
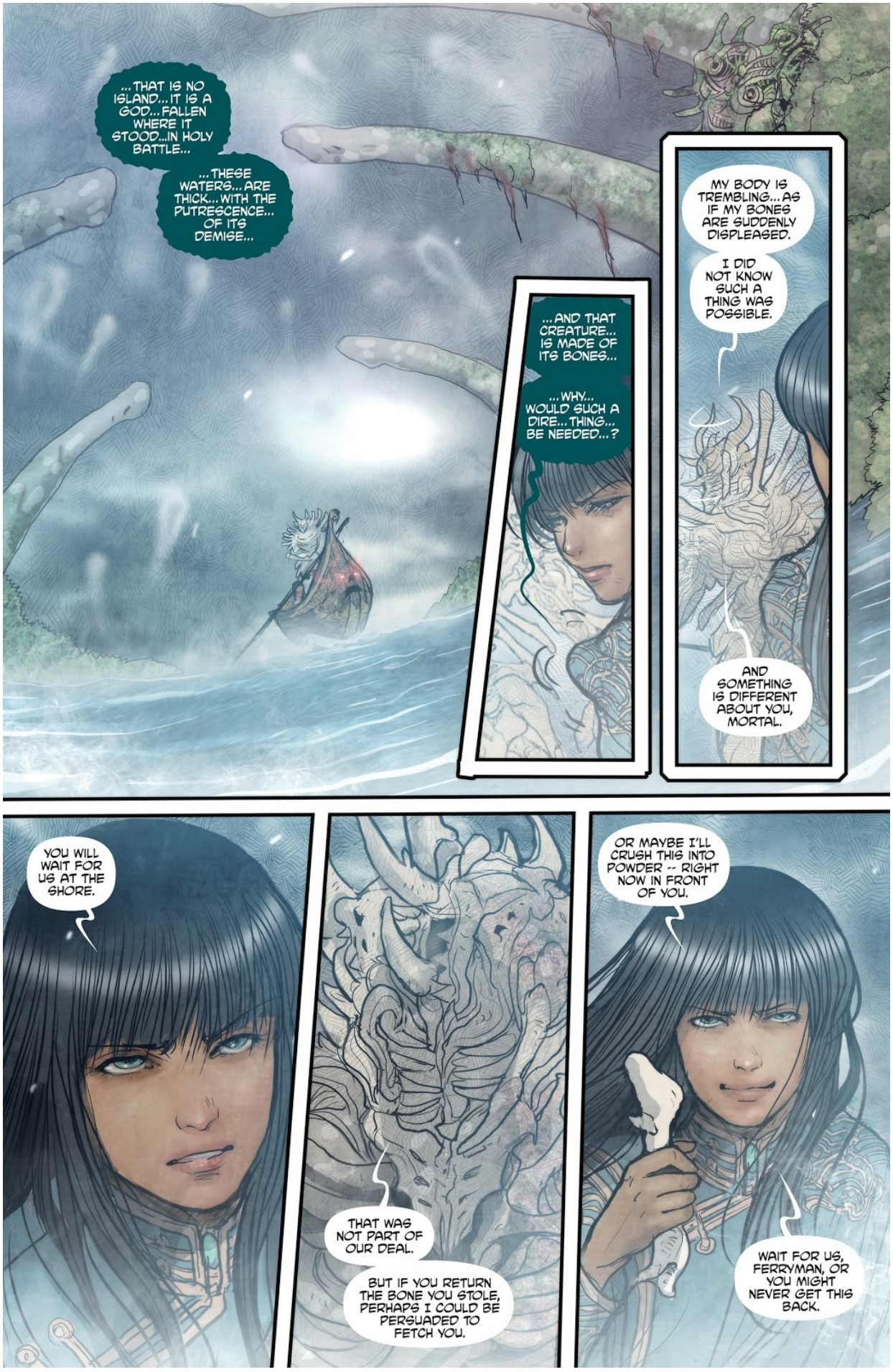
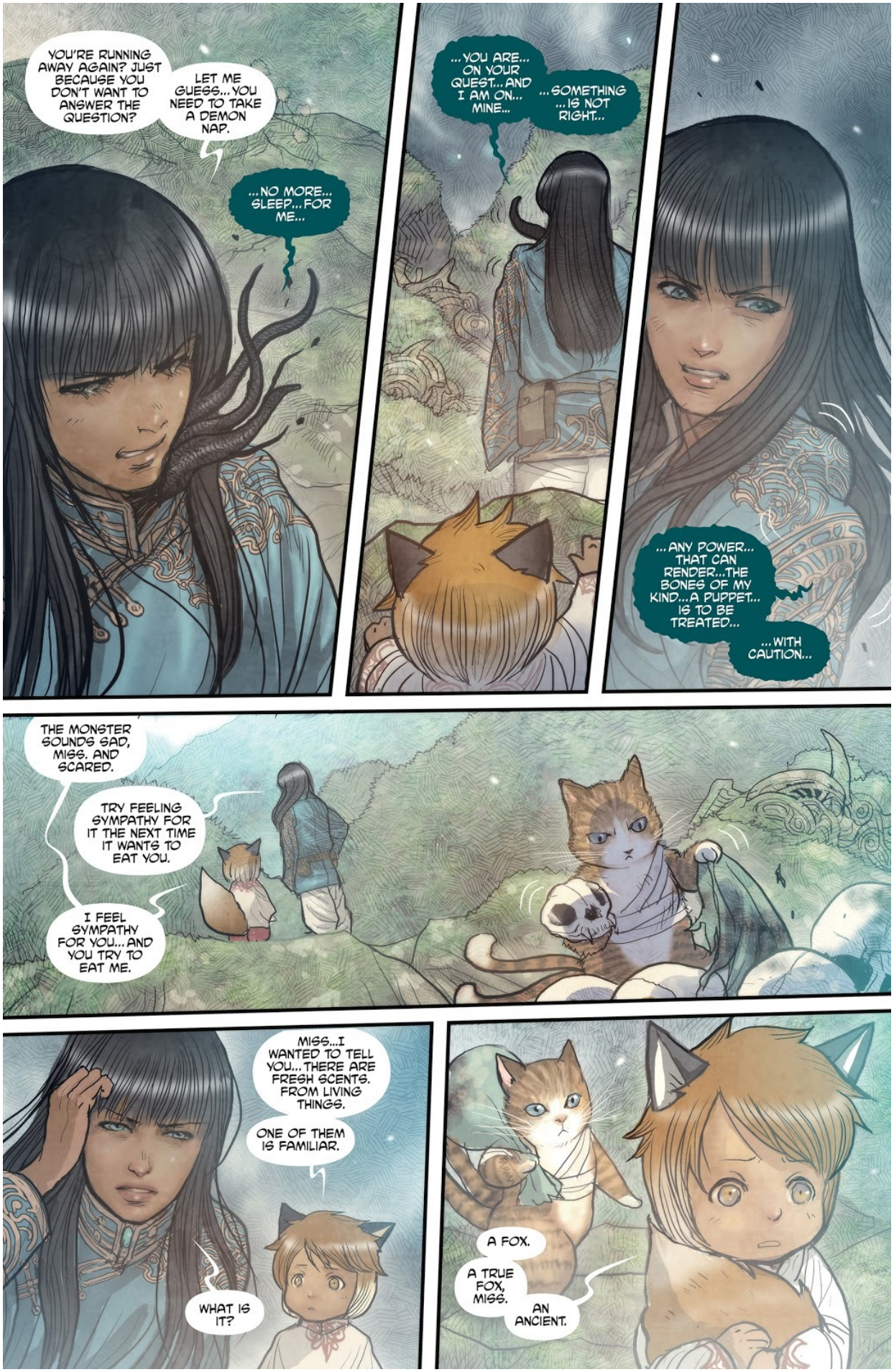
I DO.
I REMEMBER WELL THE ONE WHO BORE IT FROM THIS PLACE. YOU WILL WANT THE SAME THING SHE DID.
THE ISLAND.
GIVE IT TO ME, AND I WILL BEAR YOU THERE.
THEN YOU WILL SAIL UNTIL THE END OF YOUR DAYS. THIS IS MY DOMAIN, MORTAL. NONE MAY SURVIVE IT WITHOUT MY MERCY.
WE CAN FIND IT OURSELVES.
BRING US, THEN.
YOU MUST BE SPECIFIC WHEN NEGOTIATING WITH POWER, HALFWOLF.
WILL YOU GUARANTEE OUR SAFETY, CREATURE? ARE WE UNDER YOUR *PROTECTION?*
YES, *YES.*
NOW THE *BONE.*


AH!
ALMOST WHOLE.
GAIN ONE, LOSE ONE.
SNICK
MY PRECIOUS SELF!
THIEF! WRETCHED THIEF! I'LL FLENSE THE FLESH FROM YOUR FACE!
YOU FORGET YOURSELF. WE ARE UNDER YOUR PROTECTION. NOW BRING US TO THE ISLAND. SAFELY.
YOU PLAYED THAT WELL.
MY MOTHER RETURNED WITH A KEY...
...SO I'M GUESSING WE'LL NEED ONE TO LEAVE.

"TO YOU WE CRY, WE SEND UP OUR SIGHS, PLEASE TURN YOUR EYES OF MERCY TOWARD US...
"...BUT I SAY ROW, SISTERS, ROW, THE TIME RUNS FAST, DAYLIGHT IS PAST, YOUR HEAD WILL SPLIT IN THREE...
"I'LL DROP YOU DOWN TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA, AND IN THIS EXILE YOU WILL TOIL..."


...THAT IS NO ISLAND... IT IS A GOD... FALLEN WHERE IT STOOD...IN HOLY BATTLE...
...THESE WATERS... ARE THICK... WITH THE PUTRESCENCE... OF ITS DEMISE...
...AND THAT CREATURE... IS MADE OF ITS BONES...
...WHY... WOULD SUCH A DIRE... THING... BE NEEDED...?
MY BODY IS TREMBLING... AS IF MY BONES ARE SUDDENLY DISPLEASED.
I DID NOT KNOW SUCH A THING WAS POSSIBLE.
AND SOMETHING IS DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU, MORTAL.
YOU WILL WAIT FOR US AT THE SHORE.
THAT WAS NOT PART OF OUR DEAL.
BUT IF YOU RETURN THE BONE YOU STOLE, PERHAPS I COULD BE PERSUADED TO FETCH YOU.
OR MAYBE I'LL CRUSH THIS INTO POWDER -- RIGHT NOW IN FRONT OF YOU.
WAIT FOR US, FERRYMAN, OR YOU MIGHT NEVER GET THIS BACK.

I COULD BE WAITING A LONG TIME, MORTAL!
THE HEART OF THE ISLAND IS A TREACHEROUS PLACE! LEAVE ME THE BONE AND I PROMISE TO WAIT, AND TO DELIVER YOU TO SAFETY!
SO THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BODY OF A GOD.
IT GETS SWALLOWED BY THE WORLD.
DO YOU REMEMBER HOW IT DIED? WHAT WEAPON WAS USED?
WERE YOU THERE?
...I... CANNOT... RECALL...
BUT YOU WOULD HAVE KNOWN THIS GOD.
THERE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN THAT MANY OF YOU.
...I REMEMBER... WEAKNESS...


YOU'RE RUNNING AWAY AGAIN? JUST BECAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO ANSWER THE QUESTION?
LET ME GUESS... YOU NEED TO TAKE A DEMON NAP.
...NO MORE... SLEEP... FOR ME...
...YOU ARE... ON YOUR QUEST... AND I AM ON... MINE...
...SOMETHING ...IS NOT RIGHT...
...ANY POWER... THAT CAN RENDER...THE BONES OF MY KIND...A PUPPET... IS TO BE TREATED...
...WITH CAUTION...
THE MONSTER SOUNDS SAD, MISS. AND SCARED.
TRY FEELING SYMPATHY FOR IT THE NEXT TIME IT WANTS TO EAT YOU.
I FEEL SYMPATHY FOR YOU... AND YOU TRY TO EAT ME.
MISS...I WANTED TO TELL YOU... THERE ARE FRESH SCENTS. FROM LIVING THINGS.
ONE OF THEM IS FAMILIAR.
WHAT IS IT?
A FOX.
A TRUE FOX, MISS.
AN ANCIENT.

...IS THERE NO... END... TO THIS... DARKNESS...?
...HAS EVERYTHING... I WAS... BEEN CONSUMED...?
...I SHOULD JUST... KILL THIS PART OF YOU... AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS.
...WOULD YOUR OTHER... SELF... BE KILLED... TOO?
I... WAS ABLE... TO SEE YOUR MEMORIES...
...BUT I CANNOT... SEE MY OWN...
...THERE ARE... VAST HOLES... INSIDE ME...
...TOO MUCH SLEEP... TOO MUCH TIME... AWAY FROM... FLESH...
...YOU AND I... LITTLE ONE... ARE GHOSTS...

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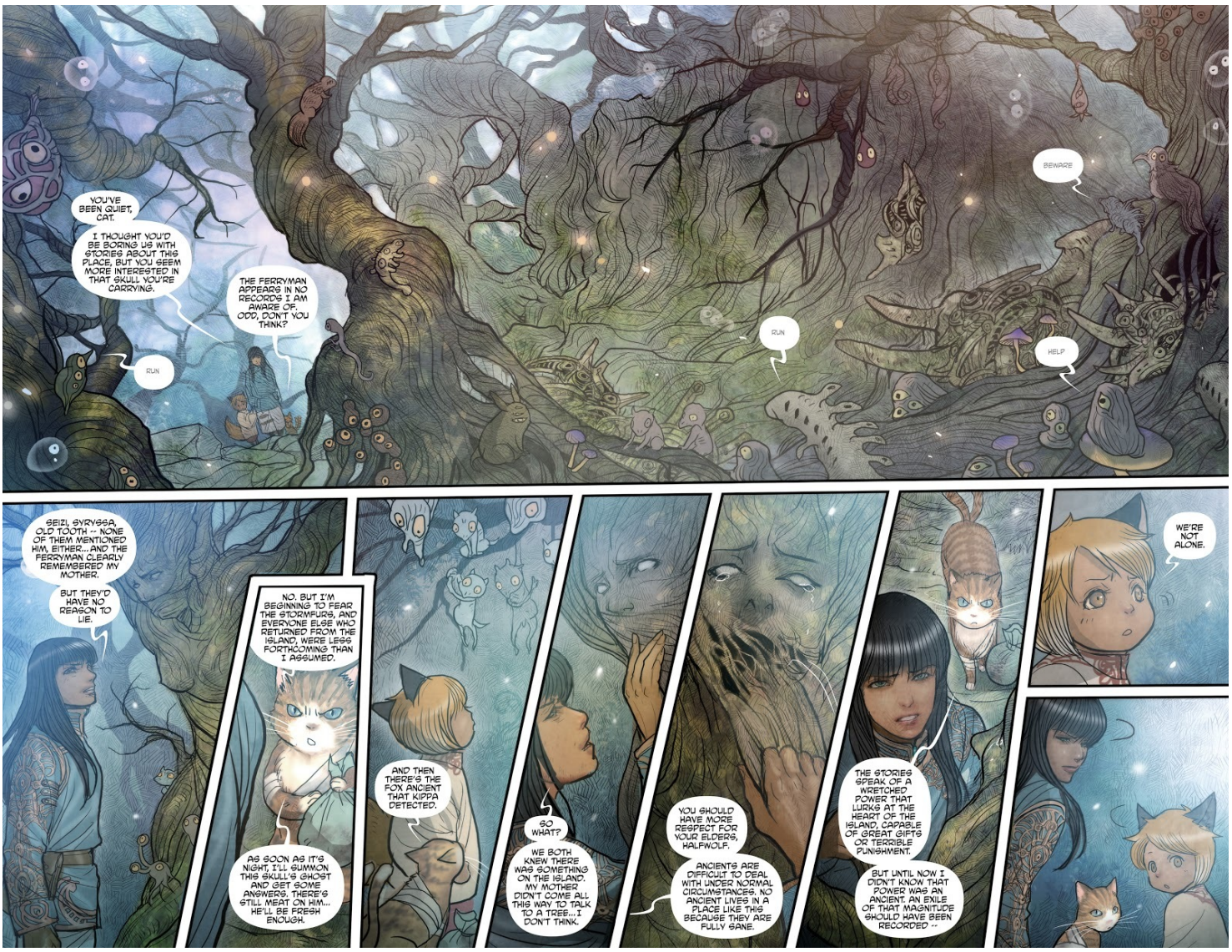
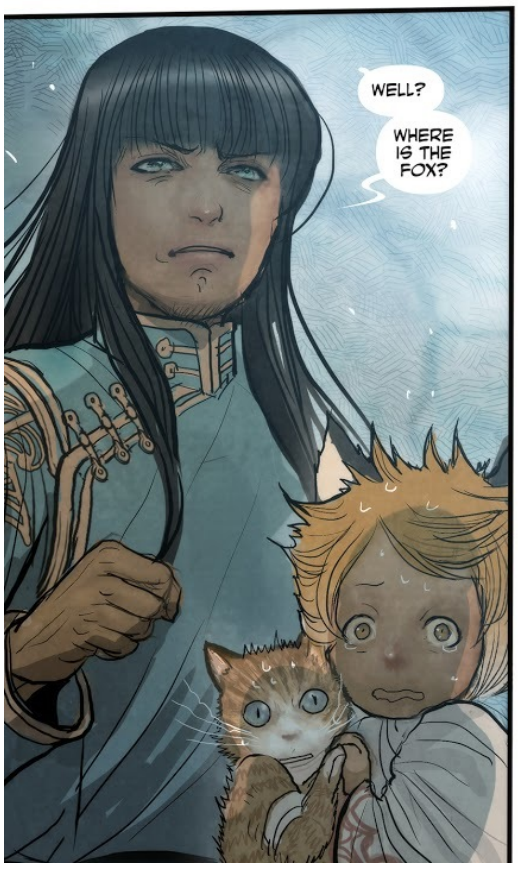

YOU'VE BEEN QUIET, CAT.
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE BORING US WITH STORIES ABOUT THIS PLACE, BUT YOU SEEM MORE INTERESTED IN THAT SKULL YOU'RE CARRYING.
THE FERRYMAN APPEARS IN NO RECORDS I AM AWARE OF. ODD, DON'T YOU THINK?
RUN
BEWARE
RUN
HELP
SEIZI, SYRYSSA, OLD TOOTH -- NONE OF THEM MENTIONED HIM, EITHER... AND THE FERRYMAN CLEARLY REMEMBERED MY MOTHER.
BUT THEY'D HAVE NO REASON TO LIE.
NO. BUT I'M BEGINNING TO FEAR THE STORMFURS, AND EVERYONE ELSE WHO RETURNED FROM THE ISLAND, WERE LESS FORTHCOMING THAN I ASSUMED.
AS SOON AS IT'S NIGHT, I'LL SUMMON THIS SKULL'S GHOST AND GET SOME ANSWERS. THERE'S STILL MEAT ON HIM... HE'LL BE FRESH ENOUGH.
AND THEN THERE'S THE FOX ANCIENT THAT KIPPA DETECTED.
SO WHAT?
WE BOTH KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING ON THE ISLAND. MY MOTHER DIDN'T COME ALL THIS WAY TO TALK TO A TREE... I DON'T THINK.
YOU SHOULD HAVE MORE RESPECT FOR YOUR ELDERS, HALFWOLF.
ANCIENTS ARE DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES. NO ANCIENT LIVES IN A PLACE LIKE THIS BECAUSE THEY ARE FULLY SANE.
THE STORIES SPEAK OF A WRETCHED POWER THAT LURKS AT THE HEART OF THE ISLAND, CAPABLE OF GREAT GIFTS OR TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT.
BUT UNTIL NOW I DIDN'T KNOW THAT POWER WAS AN ANCIENT. AN EXILE OF THAT MAGNITUDE SHOULD HAVE BEEN RECORDED --
WE'RE NOT ALONE.


WELL?
WHERE IS THE FOX?

IN NONE OF THE HISTORIES IS THERE MENTION OF A CITY ON THE ISLE OF BONES. NOTHING OF THIS SCALE OR BEAUTY.
PERHAPS THOSE WHO ESCAPED NEVER LEFT THE BEACH, CAT.
I MIGHT BELIEVE THAT, IF NOT FOR YOUR MOTHER.
THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE HERE.
YES, KIPPA. BUT WHAT IS BEING DONE TO THEM?
MISS, I DON'T THINK THAT'S FOOD THEY'RE COOKING.
IGNORE IT.
I CAN'T.

I TOLD YOUR MOTHER SHE WOULD RETURN... FAMISHED, BROKEN, A FAILURE TO HERSELF.
AND SO SHE HAS, THROUGH YOU -- THE RUIN FORETOLD
HOW MAY I BE OF SERVICE, DAUGHTER OF DOOM?
To Be Continued...

An excerpt of a lecture from the esteemed **Professor Tam Tam**, former First Record-Keeper of the Is'hami Temple, and learned contemporary of Namron Black Claw...
IT IS SAID BY THE POETS THAT IN THE THOUSAND YEARS FOLLOWING THE WAR WITH THE OLD GODS, A DRACUL WAS DISCOVERED HAUNTING THE RIVER AT THE BASE OF THE VALONT HIGHLANDS.
RARE CREATURES, EVEN THEN. BODIES LONG AS A TEMPLE COLUMN, AND JUST AS THICK AROUND; NO ARMS OR LEGS. A PROUD SKULL WITH GOD EYES -- THREE ON EITHER SIDE, BLAZING LIKE SPARKS IN VOLCANIC ASH. DEVOTEES OF FRESH WATER. GODDESS-TOUCHED, SOME WOULD ARGUE -- THOUGH SACRED ORIGINS COULD NOT SAVE THEM.
THE VALONT DRACUL HAD NEVER HARMED ANOTHER, BUT ITS EXISTENCE DROVE SOME ANCIENTS MAD WITH AVARICE. THEY WANTED ITS SKIN, THEY WANTED ITS TEETH, THEY WANTED TO HARVEST ITS BODY AS A TERRIBLE TROPHY AND HANG ITS HEAD SO THAT ALL MIGHT ENVY THEIR MIGHTINESS.
AND YET, THE POETS OF THE AGE DESCRIBE THE FIRST BATTLE BETWEEN THE VALONT DRACUL AND THE ANCIENTS AS A HUMILIATING DEFEAT. THOUGH THEY HAD FOUGHT THE GODS THEMSELVES, THE ANCIENTS WERE UNPREPARED FOR THE MAGNIFICENT POWER OF THE DRACUL.
INSTEAD OF BEING DETERRED, HOWEVER, THIS ONLY MADE THEIR BLOODLUST GROW STRONGER.
THE DRACUL DO NOT KILL... IT WOULD TAINT THEIR SOULS. RATHER THAN FIGHT AGAIN AND RISK BLOODSHED, THE VALONT DRACUL FLED UNDERGROUND THROUGH CAVERNS UNKNOWABLE TO IMMORTALS, DOWN TO A SUNLESS SEA.
IT WAS NEVER SEEN AGAIN. IN TIME, ALL THE DRACULS FLED -- OR WERE HUNTED TO DEATH.
IN ITS HASTE, THE VALONT DRACUL SCRAPED ITS SCALES AGAINST THE STONE WALLS OF THE TUNNELS THROUGH WHICH IT FLED. THOSE SCALES, OVER TIME, GREW INTO THE DAMP ROCK -- FILLING THE DARKNESS WITH A PERMANENT LIGHT THAT, EONS LATER, REFUSES TO BE EXTINGUISHED.
THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE END OF IT...SAVE THAT THESE CAVERNS HAVE SINCE BECOME A SACRED REFUGE TO ALL WHO NEED PROTECTION. IN THE TIME OF THE FIRST EXTERMINATION, ARCANICS VENTURED DEEP INTO THESE CAVES, PRAYING TO THE DRACUL FOR SANCTUARY. WHEN THE CUMAEA CROSSED THE WALL TO INVADE, ARCANICS SENT THEIR CHILDREN TO VALONT, SO THEY MIGHT HIDE IN THE SACRED CAVERNS.
REMEMBER THIS PLACE, KITS. YOU MIGHT HAVE NEED OF A DRACUL'S PROTECTION SOME DAY.
WE ARE ALL, AT TIMES, THE HUNTED.

MONSTRESS MAIL, ART, CRAFTS

Dear MONSTRESS Team,

A few months ago, I decided that I wanted to get a tattoo of my favorite MONSTRESS characters. My dear friend Ashley surprised me with a commission from Sana Takeda, who very kindly offered it as a gift to us. Now the tattoo is finally done, and I wanted to share it with you!

This amazing work was done by Tyler Danyluk at Tantrix Body Art, Saskatoon, SK, Canada.

Cheers,
Jen L.

Jen, that tattoo is amazing! Thank you so much for sharing it with us -- we're incredibly honored.

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What's this I see? Custom MONSTRESS short-boxes? That can only mean one thing: MONSTRESS is going to be around for a long time to come. What a relief.

I am very much enjoying this series. I've been a tabletop role-player for almost 20 years, and game-mastered a lot of games and campaigns over that time (many more than I've ever been a player in). Part of that reason is because I've always been a fan of world-building. And I have been very much drawn into the world of MONSTRESS, as a result of the extensive world-building that is a big part of this series. I think having Professor Tam Tam's "lessons" with every issue is a fantastic way of helping enrich our understanding of this world, without having to rely on excessive exposition within the main story.

I am also hopeful that one day I'll get to see a MONSTRESS art book. Partly because I've always been a fan of Sana's work, but also so that when I'm sitting around the table with my gaming group, I'll be able to pull it out, point to an illustration, and say, "It looks like this." I unapologetically steal from the best.

Thank you to the entire MONSTRESS team for the inspiration. I hope to be inspired for many issues to come.

Stephen F.

Stephen, that is incredibly kind. The MONSTRESS team really appreciates it. And who knows...maybe one day you'll be able to see that MONSTRESS art book, for real!

Hand-made MONSTRESS purse by Rachel F. from Madison, Wisconsin.

MONSTRESS MAIL, ART, CRAFTS

Both my husband and I are huge fans of MONSTRESS! We love everything about it, and are constantly waiting for the next issue with bated breath.

I've attached some photos of my cosplay, which is inspired by Maika's costume through Issues 2 - 6. I bought the material on our honeymoon in Borneo, and started to hand-make everything as soon as we got back!

I finished the costume last week and had to shoot it immediately. I really hope you like it, and would love for it to be featured in your Fan Art (& Crafts) section!

Issue #9 is in the post on the way to us, and we already can't wait for issue #10! I'm really excited to start making her regal blue outfit on the ship soon. :)

Looking forward to reading more of the story,
Lucy & Ben
@lyingcatcosplay

Thank you so much for the kind words -- and also: WOW! That costume is beautiful, Lucy. There was a collective gasp when we saw those photos!

Thanks for joining us this month, you lovely readers. And keep sending us your letters and photos of your arts and crafts! Your talent continues to amaze our team and we love seeing your creations! - Marjorie

SAMA'S SKETCHES

SANA'S SKETCHES

MONSTRESS™ ISSUE 10

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